

Message Text

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ACTION AF-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01 SY-04 USSS-00 IO-10 AID-05 EB-07

XMB-02 TRSE-00 COME-00 /091 W
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R 101730Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6787

INFO AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 1908

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, DM

SUBJ: PRES KEREKOU ADDRESSES CHIEFS OF DIP MISSIONS ON THE
REVOLUTION

REF A. COTONOU 1885 B. COTONOU 1877 C. COTONOU 1865 (ALL NOTAL)

SUMMARY: ON DEC 6 PRES KEREKOU CONVOKED THE CHIEFS OF DIP
MISSIONS FOR A PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF "THE REVOLUTION". AFFAIR
LOOKED LIKE A PROPAGANDA SHOW. HIS GUESTS LISTENED POLITELY TO
TWO SETS OF PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS BUT NO ONE TOOK UP HIS INVI-
TATION TO POSE QUESTIONS. KEREKOU RATIONALIZED THE RECENT
TAKEOVERS OF FOREIGN INTERESTES AND APPEALED FOR FURTHER
FOREIGN AID AND INVESTMENT. HE FAILED TO ADDRESS THE SUBJECT
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OF INDEMNIFYING THE FOREIGN FIRMS WHOSE INTERESTES WERE TAKEN

OVER. IT IS LIKELY THAT THE REVOLUTION BEING IMPOSED ON AHOMEY BY KEREKOU AND HIS SUPPORTERS HAS A CONSIDERABLE DISTANCE YET TO RUN. END SUMMARY.

1. FRIDAY 6 DEC, PRES KEREKOU CONVOKED CHIEFS AND ACTING CHIEFS OF DIP MISSIONS INCLUDING THOSE OF UN AGENCIES TO A PUBLIC MEETING AT THE PRESIDENCY TO ADDRESS THEM ON "THE REVOLUTION". READING FOR ABOUT FIFTEEN MINUTES FROM A PREPARED TEXT, AND WITH REPORTERS AND RADIO MEN BUSTLING ABOUT, HE SAID NOTHING OF SUBSTANCE ABOUT THE GOVT'S ACTIONS OR PLANS THAT HE HAD NOT ALREADY SAID AT ABOMEY ON NOV 30 OR IN ONE OR ANOTHER OF HIS RECENT SPEECHES.

2. HOWEVER HE DID MAKE A FEW REPORTWORTHY REMAKRS. AFTER NOTING THAT THE FORNMIN HAD TALKED INDIVIDUALLY TO CHIEFS OF MISSIONS ON THE GENERAL SUBJECT EARLIER IN THE WEEK, PRES SAID THAT AS FAR AS GOD WAS CONCERNED THE COUNTRY'S NEW POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ORIENTATION DID NOT ALTER ITS RELATIONS WITH ITS FRIENDS SO LONG AS THEY RESPECTED SCRUPULOUSLY DAHOMEY'S NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY. THE COUNTRY HAD CHOSEN THE SOCIALIST ROAD TO DEVELOPMENT AND NEW IDEOLOGY AS A GUIDE. FROM NOW ON THE DAHOMEAN PEOPLE THEMSELVES WOULD EXERCISE THE POWER OF DECISION OVER OWNERSHIP OF THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION AND DITRIBUTION, WHILE RESPECTING HUMAN DIGNITY AND THE INTERESTS OF OTHER PEOPLES. HE HOPED COOPERATION BETWEEN DAHOMEY AND ITS FRIENDS WOULD BE REINFORCED. IT WOULD HAVE TO BE BASED ON STRICT NON-INTERFERENCE IN DAHOMEY'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS AS WELL AS RE-SPECT FOR THE NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AND FOR THE POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL OPTIONS DAHOMEY HAD CHOSEN. THE GOVT OF DAHOMEY WOULD MEASURE THE ESTEEM OF OTHER COUNTRIES IN TERMS OF THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE REVOLUTION AND THE EXTENT OF THEIR "COOPERATION" (MEANING AID AND INVESTMENT) KEREKOU THEN ASKED FOR QUESTIONS.

3. FRENCH AMB VAN GREVENYNGHE AROSE AND TAKING THE MICROPHONE HANDED TO HIM, SAID POLITELY THAT THE CHIEFS OF MISSION HAD NOTED PRES'S GESTURE; THEY NEEDED TIME TO REFLECT ON WHAT PRES HAD SAID. HE WAS SURE SOME INDIVIDUAL CHIEFS OF MISSIONS WOULD SEEK PRIVATE AUDIENCES TO DISCUSS IMPLICATIONS FOR THEIR PARTICULAR COUNTRIES.

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4. FOR A FEW MOMENTS KEREKOU APPEARED DEFLATED AND DISORIENTED. HE RALLIED HOWEVER AND SPOKE EXTEMPORANEOUSLY ANOTHER TEN MINUTES RATIONALIZING HIS CHOICE OF IDEOLOGY AND "SCIENTIFIC SOCIALIST METHODS" ON BASIS OF COUNTRY'S EXTREME POVERTY AND EMPHASIZING HIS GOVT'S NEED FOR SUPPORT FROM ITS FRIENDS INCLUDING THE SOCIALIST COUNTRIES AS WELL AS "AND HE NAMED SPECIFICALLY) FRANCE, GERMANY, UK AND USA. HE LASHED OUT AGAINST

THE DAHOMEAN EDUCATED CLASSES, WHICH HE CHARACTERIZED AS FOREIGN IN OUTLOOK AS WELL AS USELESS TO THE COUNTRY. THE REVOLUTION WOULD ENSURE THAT DAHOMEY BELONGED TO NATIVE-ORIENTED DAHOMEANS.

5. ONLY KEREKOU'S SET SPEECH WAS CARRIED BY RADIO AND PRESS THERE HAVE BEEN NO PUBLIC REFERNCES TO VAN GREVENYNGHE'S RESPONSE OR KEREKOU'S EXTEMPORANEOUS FURTHER COMMENTS.

6. FRENCH AMB TOLD US LATER THAT, FOLLOWING THE EXERCISE DESCRIBED ABOVE, THE FRENCH GOVT DECIDED TO POSTPONE THE ARRIVAL (SLATED FOR 8 DEC) OF THE FRENCH DEL TO NEGOTIATE NEW "COOPERATION ACCORDS" WITH DAHOMEY. DECISION WAS BASED ON DAHOMEAN GOVT'S FAILURE TO PROVIDE FIRM ASSURANCES THAT IT WOULD INDEMNIFY THE FRENCH FIRMS WHOSE INTERESTS WERE TAKEN OVER.

7. COMMENT: WHOLE AFFAIR APPEARED TO BE SET UP AS A PROPAGANDA SPECTACLE, BUT IT FAILED BECAUSE VAN GREVENYNGHE WISELY DECLINED TO COMMIT THE DIP CORPS TO A PUBLIC DEBATE. HIS DECISION WAS BASED ON SOME QUICK CONTINGENCY PLANNING WITH THE GERMAN AMB (WAND) AND MYSELF, WHEN WE SAW THE MICROPHONES, THE PHOTOGRAPHERS AND JOURNALISTS, AND REALIZED THAT KEREKOU MEANT TO ENGAGE US OPENLY, IN THE PRESENCE OF OUR COLLEAGUES FROM COMMUNIST AND OTHER COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS HAVING NO INTERESTS AT STAKE IN THE RECENT SEIZURES OF FOREIGN PROPERTY.

8. SEVERAL OTHER ASPECTS OF KEREKOU'S PREFORMANCE MERIT COMMENT. FIRST, HE MADE NO EXPLICIT MENTION OF MARX OR LENIN. THE OMISSION WAS PERHAPS DUE TO COMMENTS MADE BY SOME AMB'S (INCLUDING THE NIGERIAN AND THE ZAIRIAN) TO FORNMIN ALLADAYE, WHEN HE CONVOKED US ALL INDIVIDUALLY EARLIER IN THE WEEK TO SEEK OUR REACTION TO KEREKOU'S ABOMEY SPEECH (REF A). FOR EXAMPLE
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I EXPRESSED DOUBT T ALLADAYE THAT PRIVATE FIRMS IN THE US AND ELSEWHERE WOULD BE ENTHUSIASTIC TO INVEST IN A COUNTRY THAT WAS OFFICIALLY "MARXIST-LENINIST", SIMPLY BECAUSE MARX AND LENIN WERE UNIVERSALLY REGARDED AS COMMUNIST PHILOSOPHERS; THE INVESTORS' IMPULSE WOULD PROBABLY BE TO ASSUME THAT THE CLIMATE COULD NOT POSSIBLY BE FAVORABLE. AT BEST, THERE WOULD BE A DELAY IN INVESTOR INTEREST. SECONDLY, KEREKOU DID NOT ADDRESS AT ALL THE MATTE OF SETTling WITH THE FOREIGN INTERESTS WHOSE ASSETS HAD BEEN SEIZED. HE MERELY REAFFIRMED THE NECESSITY FOR THE TAKEOVER OF FOREIGN INTERESTS, WHILE ASKING FOR MORE FOREIGN AID AND INVESTMENT. THE TOVT STILL HAS NOT MADE A PUBLIC DECLARATION ON INDEMNIFICATION (I TOLD SALLADAYE THAT USG EXPECTED FAIR IOMPENSATION MADE TO US INTERESTS TAKEN OVER BY FOREIGN GOVTS, AND I SUGGESTED THAT TO HEAD

OFF ALIENATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL INVESTING COMMUNITY, THE GOVT SHOULD DECLARE PUBLICLY SOONEST THAT IT WOULD NEGOTIATE A JUST SETTLEMENT WITH THE COMPANIES CONCERNED). THIRDLY, KEREKOU'S IMPROMPTU ATTACK ON DAHOMEY'S EDUCATED CLASSES, SHARPER THAN ANY HAD MADE BEFORE, SUGGESTS THAT DIRECT ACTIONS AGAINST THEM MIGHT NOT BE FAR OFF. FEAR IS MOUNTING RAPIDLY IN THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, THE RANKS OF PROFESSIONALS AND CIVIL SERVICE. IT IS NOW DIFFICULT TO TRANSACT ANY KING OF BUSINESS IN PUBLIC OR PRIVATE IN DAHOMEY. ONE DETERRENT IS THE FORMATION OF "COMMITTEES FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE REVOLUTION," WHICH ARE WATCH DOG GROUPS OF SUBORDINATE EMPLOYEES IN ALL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE OFFICES; THEIR CHARTER IS TO REPORT COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY ACTS (DETAILS BY AIRGRAM).

9. THE GENERAL OPINION IN COTONOU IS THAT THE REVOLUTION FROM THE TOP THAT KEREKOU AND HIS SUPPORTERS ARE ENGINEERING STILL HAS A CONSIDERABLE COURSE TO RUN.

10. FOR BONN: WE ARE REPEATING REFS TO YOU FOR BACKGROUND.
ENGLE

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Message Attributes

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